



Family Homelessness

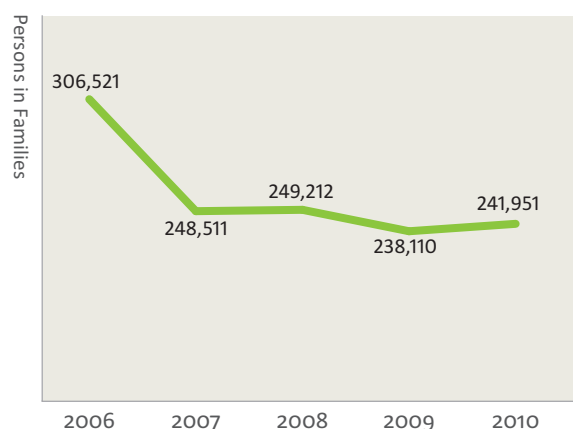
CURRENT TRENDS

According to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Point In Time (PIT) data, the number of persons in families experiencing homelessness increased slightly between 2009 and 2010, after a 25 percent decrease between 2005 and 2009. On a single January night in 2010, nearly 242,000 persons in families experienced homelessness in America.¹ Although the 2011 national data has not yet been released, many communities have released the results of their local 2011 PIT counts and have continued to see increases in family homelessness. A prolonged recession between 2007 and 2009 and the continued sluggish economy has seen unemployment rates rise. The number of Americans living below the poverty line reached 43.6 million in 2009 — a 10 percent increase in just one year.² At the same time, the affordable housing stock has shrunk in recent years.³

Faced with limited options, many low-income families double up in households with family or friends, often living in overcrowded apartments as a last best choice before entering a shelter or sleeping in their cars. These "doubled-up" households are not captured in the HUD numbers cited above. Last year, nearly 1 million children attending public schools experienced homelessness, a number which includes children living in doubled-up households. This number has been increasing since 2007, with the number of children living in doubled-up households accounting for most of the increase.⁴

The average family experiencing homelessness is headed by a single mother in her late twenties with two children, at least one of whom is under the age of six.⁵ More than 80 percent of mothers with children experiencing homelessness have previously experienced domestic violence in their lifetime.⁶

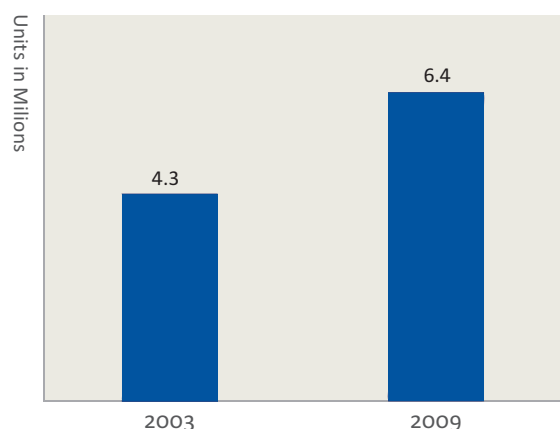
Family Homelessness in the United States at a Point in Time, 2006–2010



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Retrieved from: <http://www.hudhre.info/index.cfm?do=viewCoCMapsAndReports>

The Supply Gap

The growing difference between the number of very low income renters and the supply of affordable, available, and adequate housing, 2003 and 2009*



Source: JCHS tabulations of US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2009 American Housing Survey, using JCHS-adjusted weights. Joint Center for Housing Studies, Graduate School of Design, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University. (2011). *America's Rental Housing: Meeting Challenges, Building on Opportunities*. Retrieved from: http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11_americas_rental_housing/index.html

***NOTES** Affordable units have gross rents that are no more than 30% of the very low-income threshold (50% of HUD-adjusted area median family income). Gross rent includes rent and tenant-paid utilities. Available units are vacant or rented by households with incomes up to the very low-income threshold. Adequate units exclude occupied units that the AHS defines as severely inadequate and vacant units that lack full plumbing. Gross rent for vacant units is estimated at 1.15 times the asking rent. Units rented but not yet occupied are excluded.

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ENDING FAMILY HOMELESSNESS BY 2020

Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness set the goal of ending homelessness for families by 2020. Over the last year, there has been unprecedented collaboration from federal agencies — with one another, and with state and local governments and nonprofits — in our efforts to implement the plan.

The Recovery Act investment of \$1.5 billion in HUD's Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) has been one of the most significant success stories, giving communities needed funding during the economic downturn to stem the rising tide of family homelessness. From the program's inception in late 2009 through May 2011, over 1 million people have received assistance under the program in the form of prevention or rapid re-housing assistance with case management or short-term financial resources. Overall, nearly 90 percent of program participants exited into permanent housing.⁷ Without HPRP, the numbers of families experiencing homelessness on a given night in 2010 would have likely been much higher.

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HPRP's success paved the way for systems change in communities across the country by encouraging a new focus on prevention models and rapid re-housing techniques which are most effective for families. It also created a learning opportunity to determine which strategies are the most successful in reducing the number of families entering shelter and the length of time they spend there. The success of HPRP has spurred action and informed VA planning efforts around the new Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program. In July, VA announced \$60 million in homeless prevention grants that will serve approximately 22,000 Veteran families at-risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Collaborative work among federal agencies is critical to preventing and ending family homelessness. *Opening Doors* has shifted the federal government's response to bring mainstream resources to bear. For example, HUD has been looking at the role its public housing and affordable housing portfolio plays to prevent family homelessness and house homeless families. These resources are administered locally with local decisions about policy and practice.

To learn more about how you can partner with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness to end family homelessness in America by 2020, please visit the USICH website at usich.gov and sign up for our newsletter.

1 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development. (2010). *2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress*. Retrieved from: <http://www.hudhre.info/documents/2010HomelessAssessmentReport.pdf>

2 Current Population Reports, *Consumer Income, Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States* (Report P60-238).

3 Joint Center for Housing Studies, Graduate School of Design, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University. (2011). *America's Rental Housing: Meeting Challenges, Building on Opportunities*. Retrieved from: http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11_americas_rental_housing/index.html

4 National Center for Homeless Education. *Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program Data Collection Summary*. May 2011

5 Rog, D., Holupka, S & Patton, L. (2007, Fall) "Characteristics and Dynamics of Homeless Families With Children." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/homelessness/improving-data08/report.pdf>

6 Aratani, Y. (2009) "Homeless Children and Youth, Causes and Consequences." National Center for Children in Poverty. http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_888.pdf

7 Department of Housing and Urban Development; Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program: Year One Summary. http://www.hudhre.info/documents/HPRP_Year1Summary.pdf, p. 9.